

## Facebook Tributes

### The Tony's — And *In Memoriam*

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Regarding the 2019 Tony's: One overall gripe: Surely the new musicals must have more than *high energy production numbers* to define each show? A solo number? A duet? A quiet lyrical moment? At the least, I had hoped that the marvelous Kelli O'Hara, starring in the current musical revival, "*Kiss Me Kate*," would have sung Cole Porter's, "*So In Love*" — one of the song highlights of The Golden Age of musicals.

But, if none of the production numbers moved me, the "*In Memoriam*" section did — *move me* — because I hadn't realized that, this year, we had lost a number of theatre people that, personally, had touched my life.

"Dallas" star Ken Kercheval was in the original cast (along with Olympia Dukakis—still with us, thankfully) of my 1960's Off-Broadway play, "*Father Uxbridge Wants To Marry*."

Also in the 60s, I served on a number of panels with the great experimental theatre playwright, Maria Irene Fornes, a gracious lady, who once told me that the extraordinary experience for her at the time was hearing the songs she wrote with the Reverend Al Carmines for her award-winning musical "*Promenade*"—she wrote the book and lyrics.

Back in 2002, at the Pittsburgh Public Theatre, I joined actor Roger Robinson, after one of his performances as Hoke in "*Driving Miss Daisy*," in a discussion with a talk-back audience, and we reminisced about our days at the O'Neill Theatre Center together and about the great director and couch Lloyd Richards, whom we both worked with. That was the last time I saw Roger; a rare man. A marvelous actor.

The last time I saw book writer Jo Masteroff ("*Cabaret*," "*She Loves Me*") was at a New Dramatists luncheon some years back. I reminded him that when I was an emerging New Dramatists playwright he took me along to a meeting to promote the New Dramatists. The first thing that still writing, still dynamic man said at the ND luncheon was "I'm 93 years old" — and sadly remarked how ageism in the theatre needs to be addressed. Still does Joe. Still does.

My being introduced to Kaye Ballard at an opening night party of the musical, "*The Golden Apple*" on Broadway (one of my favorite musicals) and gushing (yes, gushing!) about her singing "*Lazy Afternoon*," a song that has become a standard. Only time I ever met her (very gracious). Her "*Lazy Afternoon*" recording stays a staple CD in my car.

Also moved by a variety of memories of wonderful theatre artists that passed, like Cicely Berry (only met her once when I attended a drama class she was conducting and she opened my eyes to the magic of Shakespeare's sonnets — never forgot it). And --Andre Previn (who bawled me out once on the phone — long story — amazing genius). Well. RIP, all.

And next year, Tony Producers — some Lyrical moments. OK?  
(photos: Irene Maria Forness, Ken Kercheval, Roger Robinson, Joe Masteroff)

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